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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Friday, March 8, 1935.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "SPRING GREEN IDEAS." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics and the Extension Service, U. S. D. A.

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Just to prove that I'm a woman of my word, I'm going to talk about greens this morning, just as I promised you I would. As soon as the first new shoots come up in the garden, as soon as the tender fresh green leaves come up in the woods and meadows, you can plan on greens for your meals. If you can go out and gather wild greens from the fields, you can serve your family a spring treat free of cost. Many wild plants that later become "weeds" make delicious food in early spring when they are tender and delicate in flavor.

You know, our grandmothers weren't far wrong in their belief that spring greens were the best of spring tonics. Of course, they didn't know that greens offered a good supply of minerals and vitamins, which the family had been running low on during the winter. But they did know from experience that when green season came in, the family began to pick up in health and spirits. Fresh new greens, either wild or garden varieties, have other good qualities beside their minerals and vitamins. They have a refreshing bright green color and also a refreshing taste, if -- and here's the catch -- if they're cooked properly.

Whenever anyone tells me that he doesn't care for greens, I suspect that what he's been eating aren't greens at all. They're just "has-beens" -- good green leaves that have been cooked to a brown, mushy, unattractive mass.

The secret of keeping greens green is an easy one to remember. Just cook them as short a time as possible in an open kettle. Have the cooking water lightly salted and briskly boiling when you put the greens in.

How much water to use? Well, to save minerals and vitamins that might dissolve in the water, use as little water as possible. Cooking in a large amount of boiling salted water preserve the nice green color, to be sure, but means some loss of food value. With a smaller amount of cooking water, you'll waste less food value. If you leave the kettle uncovered and cook the greens until just tender -- no longer -- you'll keep plenty of color and more of the minerals and vitamins. Long slow cooking and a cover do dreadful damage to greens. They'll come out olive-drab in color and very dreary-looking.

Now this question of cooking with soda which we've discussed often before but which comes up every spring alone with the greens. Does a pinch of soda in the water help keep the color in greens? Yes, it does. But the nutritionists say thumbs down on soda just the same, because it destroys the vitamins. If you cook greens rapidly in an open kettle, they'll keep their color anyway and won't need soda.





Perhaps you have noticed that a blend of flavors often makes a dish especially appetizing. This goes for greens, as well as other foods. Try combining different kinds of greens to give a blend of flavor in the finished dish. Greens with a slightly bitter flavor combine well with those of a milder taste. For example, dandelion greens combine nicely with spinach. Cook and serve them together and see what a good mixture this is. Corn salad and mustard greens make another good blend in flavor. A peppery green like cress makes good company for one that is less sharp-tasting. Try different green combinations and you'll soon hit on some that the family will call for as regularly as spring comes around.

You can vary your cooked greens by the way you season them. Bacon, fried crisp, broken into small pieces, and served on top of chopped greens is one favorite way of seasoning them. You can use a little of the bacon fat, too -- pour it over the greens to add richness and flavor. You can also use delicately browned cubes of salt pork with greens. Browned butter gives a pleasant flavor and a different flavor from just plain melted butter. Some people think olive oil and vinegar or lemon juice makes the best seasoning of all. If you like a vague flavor of onion, add a bit of onion juice to the mixture.

By the way, one of the hotels in Washington, D.C., has its own famous way of fixing spinach. If any member of your family is opposed to spinach, try him on this dish. Wash and drain the spinach and then chop it fine. Cook the chopped spinach in its own juice in an uncovered pan for about ten minutes. Drain and add some thick cream and salt and pepper to season.

These seasoning ideas are good for turnip or beet tops, and for chard, spinach or other greens that you can buy at the market or gather from your own garden at this season.

Among the common weeds that make good greens or salad greens when they come up in spring are pusley or purslane -- that wild relative of our garden portulaca. Its crisp flat leaves taste something like cress but are a bit sharper. Pusley is good either cooked or raw. The tender first leaves of dandelions are well-known greens. So are looks.

Then don't forget that plant that some people call lamb's quarters and others call goosefoot or possibly pigweed. Lamb's quarters come up in the damp fields in spring. The tender tips and the leaves are excellent cooked for about five minutes in boiling salted water.

Then, you can serve redroot or redroot amaranth, as the botanists call it. This weed grows almost everywhere in the country except in the extreme north. It makes excellent broth and delicious greens.

Well, there are just a few points to help you make the most of greens this season. Cook the least possible time in a little boiling salted water in an uncovered kettle. Season with butter, salt and pepper; or with bacon or salt pork; or with olive oil and vinegar or lemon juice. For special occasions, try chopped spinach or other greens served with a little thick cream.



